

Salmon Region

The Salmon Region was occupied by 13 documented resident, 3 documented border, and 1 suspected border packs during 2005 (Figure 13; Table 8). All 9 reproductive packs also qualified as breeding pairs; lack of radio collars prevented determining the reproductive status of the remaining 4 resident packs. Human-related deaths were the primary source of mortality ($n = 4$), followed by lethal control ($n = 2$), and unknown cause of death ($n = 1$). Confirmed and probable wolf-caused losses of cattle were attributed to the Buffalo Ridge, Galena, and Moyer Basin packs. Confirmed and probable wolf-caused losses of sheep were attributed to the Castle Peak/East Pass and Galena packs. The Galena pack was responsible for the death of 1 livestock guard dog. Eight wolves were captured, resulting in the deployment of 5 radio collars. One wolf was released due to potential drugging complications related to heat stress, another escaped, and a pup too small to be radio collared was released.

Documented Resident Packs

Bear Valley

Due to similarities in home range use, there has been some speculation that this pack may be the old Landmark pack, which lost its remaining radio collar several years ago. However, a search of a historic Landmark pack rendezvous site revealed recent wolf activity about the same time the Bear Valley pack was known to be elsewhere, suggesting the Bear Valley pack is a separate pack. Although the suspected alpha male was illegally killed in fall 2004, fieldwork verified a minimum of 3 pups in 2005, confirming the alpha female had found a new mate. Winter telemetry flights yielded a pack count of 8 wolves. This pack was counted as a breeding pair for 2005.



Wolf pups keep busy at a rendezvous site until adults return.

Photos Jason Husseman

Buffalo Ridge

In early 2005, 4 radio collars were being monitored in this pack. However, by February 2005, male B193 had dispersed and was lethally controlled near a depredation site. Another wolf, female B194, also dispersed in spring 2005 and was later lethally controlled east of Ketchum, Idaho, following a livestock depredation. Based upon howling and other sign, it appeared B194 was associated with an unknown pack of wolves with pups (see Hyndman). After losing these 2 radio-collared individuals, male B196, a dispersing wolf from the Morgan Creek pack, joined the Buffalo Ridge pack in February 2005. Reproduction in this pack was confirmed, with 6-7 pups observed near a den site. The Buffalo Ridge pack was counted as a breeding pair for 2005.

Castle Peak (East Pass)

The status of this pack has been unknown since the disappearance of B195, the sole radio-collared wolf in the pack, in March 2004. Observations of tracks during winter 2004/2005 in the East Fork Salmon River drainage, within the traditional home range of this pack, suggested these wolves were still present. However, a search of a 2003 rendezvous site and surrounding area revealed no wolf activity. In August 2005, a report of wolves with pups in East Pass Creek was received and, after investigation, biologists confirmed the presence of several adults but no definitive evidence of pups. Subsequent reports and field investigations indicated a pack of wolves using the area frequented in the past by the Castle Peak pack, but there was no definitive proof that these were the same wolves. While reproduction was reported, it could not be verified, and this pack was not counted as a breeding pair for 2005.

Galena

The Galena pack once again denned and reared a litter of pups in the Sawtooth Valley, with field observations verifying the presence of a minimum of 3 pups. Wolf B171, a pup from 2003, dispersed from her natal home range in early summer 2005, temporarily leaving just 2 radio-monitored wolves in this pack. However, during a control action in August 2005, a large male wolf, B253, was radio collared. In addition, another adult female was also caught but released uncollared; the wolf was showing signs of heat stress so it was decided to release her rather than risk putting her under anesthesia. Aerial observations in late fall 2005 resulted in a pack count of 11 wolves. This pack was counted as a breeding pair for 2005.

Hoodoo

Wolf Y239 was captured and re-collared in August 2004 near McCall, Idaho, and subsequently migrated to the Middle Fork Salmon River. During monitoring flights in winter 2004/2005, he was seen with another black wolf and it was surmised that he had paired with a female and that they would produce pups in spring. As expected, Y239 localized in a tributary on the east side of the Middle Fork, where he and his mate presumably denned. However, due to its remoteness, this site was not surveyed. In late summer 2005, a report of wolf pups in the Bighorn Crags, a remote, mountainous region due east of Y239's suspected den site, was investigated; Y239's radio signal was detected in the area where the pups had been reported. Further effort revealed that the area was being used as a rendezvous site by Y239's pack, and a minimum of 2 pups were verified. Subsequent aerial counts of 7 wolves suggested that there may have been more than 2 pups. This pack was counted as a breeding pair for 2005.

Hughes Creek

While a pack of wolves using the west side of the North Fork Salmon River had been suspected for the past several years, their presence was not officially confirmed until 7-8 wolves were observed during an IDFG big game helicopter survey in January 2005. These wolves were retroactively listed as a documented pack for 2004. During summer 2005, a trapping effort was initiated to attempt to capture and radio collar a member of this pack. Unfortunately no wolves were caught. However, while searching for wolf sign in the area personnel discovered a rendezvous site where a total of 5 pups were observed. This pack was counted as a breeding pair for 2005.

Jureano Mountain

As in the past, the Jureano Mountain pack used traditional denning and rendezvous sites in the Panther Creek drainage. Field investigations verified a minimum of 3 pups and a total of 11 wolves in this pack. The Jureano Mountain pack was counted as a breeding pair for 2005.



A member of the Jureano Mountain pack.

Photo Jason Husseman

Landmark

While there have been no radio-collared wolves in the Landmark pack since February 2003, field investigations in areas of past use revealed the presence of wolves. While a search of a historic den location in 2004 indicated that these wolves were present but not using that den, another search in summer 2005 located a probable rendezvous site in close proximity. Furthermore, a significant amount of wolf sign was located in the area, suggesting these wolves continued to function as

a pack. However, because pups could not be verified based on evidence at the suspected rendezvous site, this pack was not counted as a breeding pair for 2005 (see also Bear Valley).

Morgan Creek

In 2005, the Morgan Creek pack denned and reared a litter of 5 pups near their 2004 den site. Wolf B228, originally radio collared after being caught in a coyote trap, dispersed to Big Hole Valley, Montana, in April 2005; he was legally shot in May 2005 when he was observed chasing cattle. After roaming widely in 2004, dispersing wolf B196 joined the Buffalo Ridge pack in February 2005. In November 2005, biologists counted 13 wolves during a monitoring flight. The Morgan Creek pack was counted as a breeding pair for 2005.



Photo Jason Husseman

Moyer Basin Pack densite.

Moyer Basin

The Moyer Basin pack produced a litter in 2005, with a total of 5 pups observed at their den. Also, 2 wolves with radio collars were observed, one presumably being B97, whose radio collar had been malfunctioning for over 1 year. In July 2005, a trapping effort was initiated to bolster the number of radio-collared wolves in the pack, where alpha female B145 was the lone radio-collared wolf. Trapping efforts resulted in the capture and radio collaring of 3 additional wolves in this pack, males B240, B242, and B243. In October 2005, the Moyer Basin pack was implicated in a depredation and B97 was lethally controlled, confirming his membership with the pack during the interval when he was not actively monitored. Monitoring flights in late fall 2005 indicated at least 10 wolves in this pack. This pack was counted as a breeding pair for 2005.

Owl Creek

Little is known of this pack, which appeared to use the steep slopes north of the Salmon River downstream from Shoup, Idaho. During an IDFG ungulate survey in January 2005, 9-10 wolves were observed, verifying them as a documented pack. However, since reproductive status was unknown, this pack was not counted as a breeding pair for 2005.

Twin Peaks

Despite not having radio-collared wolves in the Twin Peaks pack since late 2001, until recently, biologists were able to verify reproduction due to the high degree of site fidelity these wolves exhibited for their traditional den site. However, no sign of wolves was observed when their den/rendezvous site in the Frank Church River-of-No-Return Wilderness was surveyed in summer 2005. The status of the Twin Peaks pack was unknown by the end of 2005 and this pack was not counted as a breeding pair for 2005.

Yankee Fork

During late winter 2004/2005, biologists received reports of multiple wolves north of the Salmon River between Clayton and Stanley, Idaho. In August 2005, responding to a report of wolves in the Yankee Fork drainage within this area, a capture effort resulted in the radio collaring of subadult female B252. Additionally, a minimum of 2 pups was heard howling in the vicinity of the trapline. While the extent of this pack's home range was unknown, a limited number of monitoring flights suggested these wolves occupied the area west of the Buffalo Ridge pack's home range. Monitoring flights indicated a minimum of 8 wolves in this pack. The Yankee Fork pack was counted as a breeding pair for 2005.

Documented Border Packs

Battlefield (MT)

The Battlefield pack is a Montana-documented pack whose territory overlapped into Idaho around the Gibbonsville, Idaho, area. In January 2005, this pack numbered 9 individuals and in spring had a litter of 5 pups. As in the past, depredations in Montana's Big Hole Valley throughout the livestock-grazing season led to control actions that resulted in lethal removal of 6 pack members. In addition, 3 wolves were legally shot by private landowners under provisions of the 10(j) Rule. In November and December 2005, the sole radio-collared Battlefield wolf was located on the Idaho side of the border. By the end of 2005, this pack numbered 5 wolves (2 adults, 3 pups). The Battlefield pack was counted as a breeding pair for Montana in 2005.

Black Canyon (MT)

The Black Canyon pack is a Montana-documented pack. Although there was no evidence that this pack's territory overlapped into Idaho, this pack was considered a border pack because of the close proximity to the Montana/Idaho border around the upper Lemhi River area. The Black Canyon pack did not contain radio-collared wolves and produced at least 1 pup in 2005. They resided in the Horse Prairie and southern end of the Big Hole Valley areas of Montana. This pack was involved in livestock depredations that led to lethal removal of 3 individuals, including the alpha female. At the end of 2005, a minimum of 4 wolves remained. This pack was counted as a documented pack for Montana, but was not counted as a Montana breeding pair for 2005 because only 1 pup was verified and the alpha female was lethally removed.

Painted Rocks (MT)

The Painted Rocks group is a Montana-documented pack. Although there was no evidence of this pack using Idaho, it was considered a border pack because of the close proximity to the Montana/Idaho border around the Northfork, Idaho, area. Capture attempts were made in the vicinity of Painted Rocks Reservoir by MTFWP personnel based on wolf sign found in 2005. A rendezvous site was located and sign in the area indicated production of at least 2 pups in 2005. Tracking by MTFWP and public reports suggested a minimum of 3 adults. Radio-collared female B67 inhabited this area for much of 2001 and 2002, but reproduction was not confirmed nor was there evidence of more than 2 individuals. It was possible that either of 2 documented packs on the Idaho side of the border, Owl Creek or Hughes Creek, could be one and the same as Painted Rocks, as both of their undefined home ranges would likely encompass the headwaters of the West Fork of the Bitterroot River, which drains into Painted Rocks Reservoir. In addition, none of these groups contained a radio-collared wolf during 2005, complicating documentation of wolf status in this area. The Painted Rocks pack was counted as a breeding pair for Montana in 2005.

Suspected Border Packs

Leadore (Grassy Top) (MT)

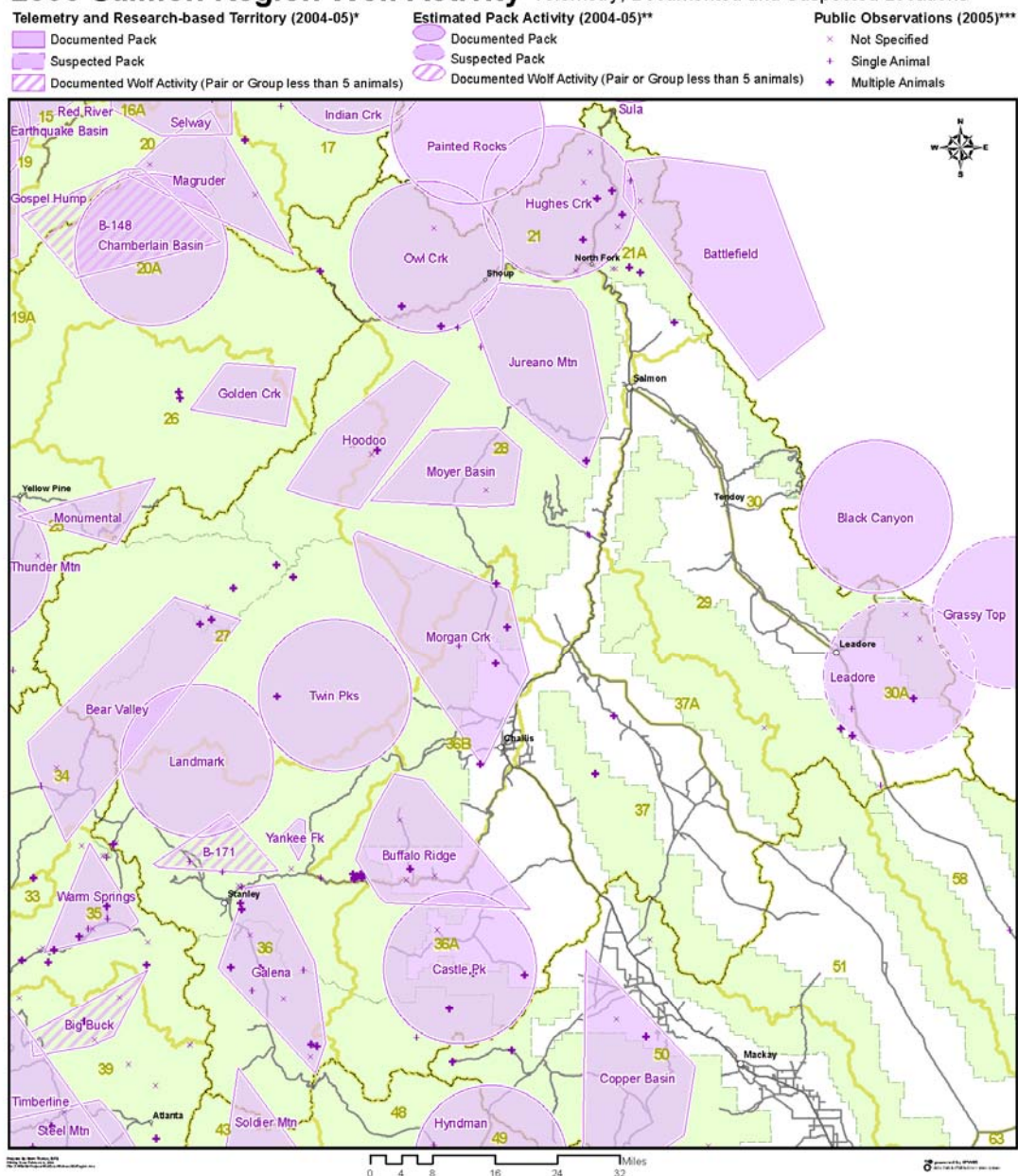
Wolf sightings have been reported in the vicinity of Leadore, Idaho, for several years, submitted by both the public as well as IDFG employees. Additionally, wolves have been reported across the divide in Montana, and there is some speculation that the observations on either side may be attributed to 1 pack that resides part-time in both states. Further investigation is needed to determine the status of these wolves.

Other Wolf Groups Monitored

B171

Having spent the first 2 years of life with her natal Galena pack, female B171 dispersed during early summer 2005. Monitoring flights indicated she was establishing a home range due north of her natal pack's territory. In late fall 2005, she was observed during an aerial monitoring flight traveling with another wolf. B171 and her companion were considered to be a potential mated pair and anticipated to produce pups in 2006.

2005 Salmon Region Wolf Activity Telemetry, Documented and Suspected Locations



* Telemetry data and research locations collected and analyzed by Idaho Department of Fish and Game, the Nez Perce Tribe, Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks and the National Park Service. Pack territories are minimum convex polygons of telemetry locations and research observations for radio-collared wolves from 1/1/2004 - 12/31/2005 with outliers removed. Packs which no longer existed in 2005 are excluded. This map is provided for management purposes and should not be used for data analysis. Do not release these data to third parties without first contacting the Idaho Department of Fish and Game or the Nez Perce Tribe.

** Estimated Pack Activity determined by biologists from research locations, public observations and incidental observations from 1/1/2004 - 12/31/2005.

*** Public Observations from 1/1/2005 - 12/31/2005 collected on the Idaho Fish and Game website and reviewed by staff biologists.

Figure 13. Wolf pack activity and observations in the Salmon Region, 2005.

Table 8. Estimated pack size, reproductive status, mortality, dispersal, monitoring status, and livestock depredation for documented and suspected wolf packs within Idaho Department of Fish and Game Salmon Region, 2005.

Wolf pack or group	Min. no. wolves observed ^a	Reproductive status				Documented & suspected mortalities				Known dispersal	Monitoring status			Confirmed & probable wolf- caused livestock losses		
		Min. no. pups prod.	Reprod. packs	Breeding pairs ^b	Natural	Control ^c	Other human ^d	Unknown ^e	Active radio collars		Number wolves captured ^f	Number wolves missing ^g	Cattle	Sheep	Dogs	
Documented																
Battlefield (MT) ^h																
Bear Valley	8	3	yes	yes	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	
Black Canyon (MT) ^h																
Buffalo Ridge	9	6	yes	yes	0	1	0	0	2	2	0	1	2	0	0	
Castle Peak (E Pass)	?	?	?	?	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	25	1	
Galena	11	3	yes	yes	0	0	0	0	1	3	2	0	2	7	0	
Hoodoo	7	2	yes	yes	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	
Hughes Creek	8	5	yes	yes	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Jureano Mountain	11	3	yes	yes	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	
Landmark	?	?	?	?	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Morgan Creek	13	5	yes	yes	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	
Moyer Basin	10	5	yes	yes	0	1	0	0	0	4	4	0	1	0	0	
Owl Creek	9	?	?	?	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Painted Rocks (MT) ^h																
Twin Peaks	?	?	?	?	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Yankee Fork	8	2	yes	yes	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	
Dispersers					0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	
Subtotal	94	34			0	2	3	0	5	18	7	1	5	32	1	
Suspected																
Leadore (Grassy Top) (MT) ^h																
Other groups																
B171	2				0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	
Unknown					0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Subtotal	2				0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	
Regional total	96	34			0	2	4	1	5	19	7	1	5	32	1	

^a Number of wolves observed by wolf program personnel in 2005. Sum of this column does not equate to number of wolves estimated to be present in the population.

^b Breeding pairs are the measure of Federal and State wolf recovery and management goals. A breeding pair is defined as "an adult male and an adult female wolf that have produced at least 2 pups that survive until December 31 of the year of their birth..."

^c Includes agency lethal control and legal take by landowners.

^d Includes all other human-related deaths.

^e Does not include pups that disappeared before winter.

^f Includes all wolves captured during 2005. Most, but not all, were radio-collared.

^g Radio-collared wolves that became missing in 2005.

^h Border pack officially tallied to (state); territory known or likely shared with Idaho. Data on these packs can be found in Rocky Mountain Wolf Recovery 2005 Interagency Annual Report.